

Cromarty East Church Newsletter

Issue 3 : Spring 2009

Edited by Caroline Vawdrey



Work underway from floor to ceiling



The East Church has taken on a ghostly appearance since the winter newsletter. Scaffolding, draped in white, now reaches to roof height, and all the cement-based harling has been removed in readiness for re-pointing with lime during the spring. Some interesting stonework appeared during the harling removal including a former – probably medieval – doorway on the north wall of the main aisle (A), a carved stone high in the north gable (B) and a medieval window stone re-used as a sill (C).



Inside, the church looks rather more ready for use as a warehouse than for worship. All the wall monuments, loft fronts and the pulpit have been covered up for their protection and internal scaffolding has created a second storey (D). This is to allow the Laing Traditional Masonry team to take off the gypsum plasterwork and to look at the roof timber ends for signs of rot.



So far, the timbers appear to be in better condition than expected and less plasterwork has to be removed than

previously thought necessary.

Paint layers from around the inside walls of the church have been sent for analysis, and next stages inside will be to repair lathe work and re-plaster with lime. Outside there will be preparation for



lime harling and the roof slates are to be removed and a new breathable membrane laid before re-roofing.

Medieval Altar Kerb revealed

One of the most exciting archaeological finds was that of the medieval altar kerb at the east end of the church – a discovery made even more special by the fact that the main stone (pictured) was a re-used 14/15 century gravestone sliced in half longitudinally, and still showing the decorated boss and sword shaft. The kerb has been covered over again now, but there are plans to make sure that its position is properly marked.



Lime courses

Laing Traditional Masonry will be sharing their expertise in the use of lime through a series of courses in the summer. There are two one-day workshops for the construction industry, and an evening session for homeowners with lectures and a practical demonstration.

The full day courses will each have a different emphasis - with one for contractors who will work with lime and the second for building professionals specifying the use of lime. Each will cover a range of topics from an introduction to lime mortars to raking out and pointing, lime harling and limewashing.

The course fees will be heavily subsidised thanks to the Heritage Lottery Fund. For more information, or to book, contact Caroline or David via the contacts overleaf.



Schools invited to visit



The SRCT is keen to get school children along to the church, and have launched an education pack to help groups get the most from their outing. Designed by former teacher and historic buildings

specialist, Emma Griffiths of Building Learning, the pack is full of ideas of activities that classes can do before, during and after a visit.

The tours will be led by either Caroline or David, and Andy Newcombe, project leader for Laing Traditional Masonry, will also be contributing his expertise. Andy will tell schoolchildren all about the different craft skills being used at the church and – too much fun to resist – what happens when you mix water and lime.

If you'd like to arrange a school visit to the church contact either Caroline or David – details at the bottom of the page.



Cromarty opens for the summer

There will be plenty to do in Cromarty on Saturday 2 May.

Caroline and David will be giving tours of the East Church, and bringing people up-to-date with the work in progress there. Tours will be at 10.30 and 11.30 and numbers will be limited to 15 per tour.

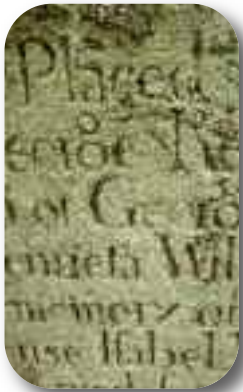


During the afternoon there will be the launch of the Cromarty dialect booklet, produced by Am Baile, at 2.00pm in the Old Brewery, and at 3.00pm there will be the official opening of the new exhibitions at Cromarty Courthouse Museum. Of special interest to East Church fans will be display panels about work at the church, medieval items from the museum collection and a book for people to write their reminiscences of the church in.

Hugh Miller's house and cottage are open Sunday to Wednesday and offer a fascinating insight into his life and work.



Learning more about the kirkyard



A group of local enthusiasts have got together to find out more about the East Church kirkyard. Following a very useful – if a touch chilly – meeting around the gravestones with Helen Bradley from Archaeology Scotland, we decided to meet up again in the warmer climes of late spring.

The group will meet on Tuesday 28 April at 10.00 at the East Church gates, and anyone interested in joining the group is welcome. David Alston will talk about some of the interesting stones in the kirkyard, after which the group will adjourn indoors to make more detailed plans for research.

Church fabric day

The SRCT was delighted at the response to the church fabric course held in March. The day was fully booked and satisfaction with the event was high, thanks to the practical and informative presentations by Roger Curtis from Historic Scotland.

Roger referred to some useful websites: Historic Scotland – <http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/> – has a wide ranging catalogue of free downloadable documents on building maintenance and www.maintainyourchurch.org.uk similarly has many sources of sound advice – soon to be supplemented by the 'digital church'.

To keep up-to-date with what's happening at the East Church

- ◇ Check out our website at www.eastchurchcromarty.co.uk
- Look for updates on our noticeboard at the church gate
- Contact the community and education officers - Caroline and David on 01381 600243 or by emailing info@eastchurchcromarty.co.uk

